



## A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

### *Driving After Dark*

*Graduated Driver Licensing Night Driving Restrictions and Drivers Aged 16 or 17 Years Involved in Fatal Night Crashes — United States, 2009–2014*

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*[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Motor-vehicle accidents can happen at any time, but the risk for a crash, particularly among young drivers, increases substantially after dark.

Dr. Ruth Shults is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. She's joining us today to discuss the dangers of teens driving after dark. Welcome to the show, Ruth.

[Dr. Shults] Thank you, Bob.

[Dr. Gaynes] Ruth, how much more of a risk for a serious motor-vehicle accident is there for a young driver *after* dark?

[Dr. Shults] We found that beginning driver teens are about three times more likely to be in a fatal crash during nighttime hours than during daytime.

[Dr. Gaynes] What makes driving after dark more challenging for young drivers?

[Dr. Shults] Driving at night is especially challenging for these beginning drivers simply because they don't have experience driving at night. There're also some risky behaviors, such as drinking and driving, speeding, or carrying teen passengers that may be more common at night.

[Dr. Gaynes] What kinds of nighttime driving limitations do states put on young drivers?

[Dr. Shults] Forty nine states limit the hours that a beginning teen driver can drive at night without an adult in the car. However, the starting times for those restrictions vary from state to state.

[Dr. Gaynes] Have limitations on young drivers helped?

[Dr. Shults] Yes and we found that states that have restrictions that begin at 10:00 PM or earlier seem to help the most.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are some other ways parents can help ensure the safety of their young drivers?

[Dr. Shults] We encourage parents to ride along with their teen drivers on nighttime trips, whenever possible, even after that teen is licensed. This is a time when parents can share their insights into how driving at night is different, how it's more difficult, and how to stay safe at night. And because parents are the main enforcers of nighttime driving restrictions and other rules of the road, we encourage parents to be familiar with their state's teen driving policies and restrictions. Of course, parents are free to set earlier nighttime restrictions if they feel their state's restriction begins too late. And lastly, we encourage

parents to sit down, discuss, and formalize their teen driver's Rules of the Road in a written parent-teen driving agreement. An example of such an agreement is available on the CDC website.

[Dr. Gaynes] Ruth, where can listeners get more information about keeping young drivers safe?

[Dr. Shults] They can go to [cdc.gov/parentsarethekey](http://cdc.gov/parentsarethekey) and that's all one word.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Ruth. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Ruth Shults about the dangers of young drivers operating motor vehicles after dark.

Parents—Ensure that teens gets plenty of nighttime driving experience with an adult, and enforce nighttime driving restrictions when they drive independently.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for A Cup of Health with CDC.

*[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.*